

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS
PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO
BERNALILLO COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2008, 7 P.M.
VISTA GRANDE COMMUNITY CENTER**

A public meeting in Commissioner Michael Brasher's district regarding the proposed amendments to the Bernalillo County Animal Control Ordinance was held at Vista Grande Community Center, #15 La Madera Road, Sandia Park, at 7 p.m. Approximately 28 people attended. Commissioner Michael Brasher welcomed everyone and introductions were made. The Commissioner discussed the ordinance process and he also discussed the planning process for an East Mountain regional animal facility. Commissioner Brasher then facilitated a comment and input session from the attendees. Public comments included the following:

Fees – Fees for intact licenses are disproportionately higher than sterilized license fees. There is planned and unplanned breeding. Responsible breeders are being penalized by the proposed fees. We need to find a way to reach irresponsible backyard breeders. One hobby breeder doesn't want individual license fees since the hobby fee inspection checks for current rabies vaccinations. Many responsible breeders wait two years to breed their animals and they have to pay these excess fees during this time. Breeders want to do their share. Another person asked that the language for fees be clarified about paying for hobby breeder, licenses, and intact fees. Are all required? A hobby breeder stated that his conditional use permit from Zoning allows him to breed his dogs four times a year, even though he doesn't.

Spay and Neuter – One man stated he doesn't agree with mandatory spay and neuter laws. He believes you should pay a permit fee for an intact animal. We need a solution to stop killing animals. Purebred animals are sold for a lot of money. Breeders pay thousands for vet care. An additional \$460 fee doesn't seem unreasonable to him. Another woman stated you wouldn't be able to raise taxes this much in one year, so we shouldn't be able to raise these hobby breeder fees this much in one year, which is what would happen by requiring each animal to be licensed as part of the hobby breeder permit. She states this is an unfair tax. One woman raises show dogs and does therapy with dogs. Many people are moving from the County due to costs and lack of freedom. Passing more mandatory laws, such as spay and neuter, and raising fees is causing people to move. Only law-abiding citizens buy licenses. These fees penalize law-abiding citizens. People won't pay the fees. Another woman stated a disgraceful number of animals have to be euthanized. One woman stated that hobbies cost money and hobby breeders shouldn't object to the fees. She stated that \$300 to \$400 is nothing for a hobby. Albuquerque animal shelters handled 30,000 animals in a 3 year period. 14,000 were euthanized. It is muddy waters when you argue that spay/neuter doesn't help. Vets disagree as to whether unaltered animals show more aggression and roam more. She said this doesn't matter. The issue is the number of animals being killed. What is the

taxpayer paying for each individual animal? One woman stated that the root issue is irresponsible owners. No responsible owner would sell a puppy through the classified ads. Another woman moved here from Chicago and was surprised to hear that the number of animals euthanized here is the same as Chicago. She states newspapers need to be more responsible and should have large ads and articles about shelter facts. Commissioner Brasher said we can do our part. A real need exists to have a robust educational program and he knows Animal Control staff support this. The Commissioner stated that we need to encourage active participation in government. Another woman stated that most hobby breeders don't have many litters. It was suggested that we limit the people who breed their animals elsewhere and sell the offspring here. A woman who rescues animals agrees and praises good hobby breeders. She wants to see other breeders do rescue of their breeds. A representative from Animal Protection of New Mexico (APNM) stated that APNM has a list on their web site of all animal rescue organizations. A man in attendance stated that he looked up the year 2000 statistics and learned there are 100 million pets in the United States. With a population of 300 million, that's a 1 – 3 ratio. The US euthanizes 500,000 to 600,000 dogs and cats a year. If Albuquerque euthanizes 30,000 a year, that's a large number.

Chaining – One man suggests that the chaining laws be strengthened. He states as it reads now it is way too subjective. An APNM study showed that chaining causes violence, more dog bites, and is cruel if not done properly. He believes a tether trolley would be better. He can understand a situational need for chaining, but something needs to be done. Another woman listed many instances where an animal should not be chained—around children, when in season—chained dogs are a risk to children and chaining is unsafe for dogs. People mentioned that we are talking about the unincorporated and more rural portions of the County, not Albuquerque. One person mentioned that sometimes animals are crated for longer times than they are chained. Chaining can be appropriate under the right circumstances. Chaining is a tool to be used properly. Don't outlaw it across the board. Another woman suggested outlawing chaining with possible exceptions. Most problems are solitary dogs by themselves. Chaining is a red flag for abuse, neglect and cruelty. Sometimes the collar or chain itself grows into the neck. Most dogs on chains live in horrendous conditions. Ideally, people should have a fence. A tether trolley is an option or good alternative. Another man stated that chaining in and of itself should not be considered a crime. There are other problems. A woman involved in a rescue group stated she abhors chaining but know there are dogs that need further restraint. She recommended electric fences. Another person said society has to have rules. One woman commented that as long as there is no abuse or neglect, people who chain animals should not be judged. Don't micromanage. Pets do get their chains wrapped around things. One man mentioned that he understands sled dogs may need to be chained and exceptions should be made. Another woman said don't intrude on personal freedoms.

Pet Stores and Sales of Cats and Dogs – A show of hands was held and all present were opposed to the sale of cats and dogs in pet stores.

Number of Animals – The woman involved with rescue mentions she has 15 dogs and her site is monitored each year. She states it gets dicey looking at the number of animals. It can be hard to decide for yourself if you have too many. The number allowed should be based on the facilities and the amount you can humanely care for. She said it is easy to overextend yourself, and the laws and officers keep her honest. Another woman provided Animal Control with a copy of a document that explains why limit laws don't work. Commissioner Brasher mentioned that no one at these meetings has requested or supported limiting the number of animals.

Microchips – One person stated it is an invasion of privacy to be told to provide microchips. The County needs to have low cost (\$5 or \$10) microchip clinics. Education is critical. Need money to tell computers to include animal's microchip numbers in the database. We must be able to identify owners locally, not just through the national companies. Microchips must be registered. One man stated that a study suggests that 2 to 4% of dogs get carcinoma from microchips. Another man stated there is a need for a permanent form of ID. Could be tattoos. There should be a veterinarian exception for microchips/waiver requirements. Microchips do migrate. A man stated there is a need for a longitudinal 20 year study on the effect of microchips on canines. Some doctors and vets believe there is a chance of cancer. Another person stated that if microchips are used, be sure to register them, and animal control should have a scanner that can read all chips. Pet Smart is using a new European microchip that can't be read by our current scanners. A hobby breeder mentioned that she has microchipped 350 pets and has had no complaints about any of them. Microchips provide a good re-uniting of animals with owners. Another person asked for a cheaper alternative. The chip itself costs \$10, but vets charge from \$20 to \$100 to implant them. Another woman suggested that since microchips can migrate, the whole animal should be scanned for chips. Registration is important. You must re-register when you have a new address. Education is key. Can funding from the higher permit fees go to education? Commissioner Brasher mentioned that at budget time, the County needs to look at this. Another man stated that all animals should have some form of permanent ID—wants to see an alternative. Questions were answered about how microchips work.

General Comments – One woman mentioned that during inspections of a facility, animal control officers can bring in disease. There should be an alternative to animal control officers doing the inspection because of viruses. Consider someone else inspecting hobby breeder sites. One man suggested having one day a week for inspections, when that officer does no animal handling. Or we could try using veterinarians as site inspectors. People inspecting premises should change their clothes and wash. Another person asked what happens at dog shows? Some people said only the judges handle their dogs. Another person said lots of people touch their dogs at dog shows. Another woman mentioned that there are no young animals at dog shows and older animals are fully vaccinated. One woman suggested that people who participate in service therapy, agility, Schutzhund, etc. be exempt from fees and fines. Dog events bring in money and there were 38 days of dog shows in Bernalillo County last year. Another woman voiced her concerns about equines and their exposure to UV rays—animals with fur/older/sick horses not acclimated, muzzles and eyes are susceptible to UV rays.

Equine need something to protect them from the elements. Another woman talked about the possible East Mountain shelter and the need for something with Valencia County to address “southside” issues. Education is key.

Commissioner Brasher concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. He stated that at each meeting new and important information is shared. He recommended that everyone attending should look at the comments from previous meetings, from all areas of the unincorporated section of Bernalillo County. The comments are posted on the County’s web page at www.bernco.gov. He invited everyone to join him at the next public meeting on the same subject being held Wednesday, August 13 at 7 p.m. at Los Vecinos Community Center in Tijeras.